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Article

Before the Nation-State: Civilizations, World Orders, and the Origins of Global International Relations

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Abstract

The dominant perspectives on International Relations (IR) focus on the rise of the Western civilization and the global expansion of the European Westphalian system as their starting point. This leads to a narrow Eurocentric understanding of IR that obscures the role and contribution of other civilizations to the evolution of world order. However, during the last 5000 years, many civilizations have risen, fallen, and survived. This essay focuses on five world orders that made their mark before the "rise of the West" or the advent of European colonialism around roughly the 16th century AD: Near Eastern, Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and Indian Oceanic. A study of classical civilizations and world orders can help IR scholars to more fully engage history and reshape the study of IR theories and concepts in several ways. It helps us to understand, and if necessary, challenge, the dominance of certain key ideas that claim to be universal and have been taken for granted as such. Moreover, studying IR from a historical–civilizational perspective opens the door to understanding both material and ideational relationships among states and societies. It also encourages a shift in IR thinking from the conventional state-centric category of the "international system" to the broader framing of world order.

Introduction

At the outset, let us ask ourselves why should we use the category "civilizations,"[1] a cultural and social concept, rather than "state" or the "nation-state," to study "international relations" (IR)? The link between the two is not obvious and is in any case fairly new. For this, we might owe a note of thanks to the late American political scientist Samuel Huntington. In an essay published in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine in 1993, just after the Cold War

[1] A civilization, according to William McGaughey, is "a type of human community or society that has achieved a certain level of culture… The culture must be comparatively advanced or developed. It would include large-scale political organization and sophisticated expression in a medium such as writing." William McGaughey, *Five Epochs of Civilisation* (Minneapolis, MN: Thistlerose Publications, 2000).

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ended, Huntington wrote: "the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural…the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilisations."[2] These words initiated a global debate over what came to be known as the "clash of civilisations" thesis, a debate that reappears every time there is a major terrorist attack or outbreak of ethnic conflict. From the 9/11 attacks to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or a spike in US–China tensions, pundits and policymakers in the West have found Huntington's thesis a convenient point of departure, whether openly or implicitly, in understanding and responding to the situation.[3]

Huntington's well-known thesis has also been criticized and condemned, including by subject experts on culture and violence in different regions of the world.[4] Critics have found his classification of the world's civilizations into seven categories (Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African), overly simplistic, downplaying the diversity within and overlap between them. A striking example of where his predictions have gone wrong is in the case of Ukraine. Huntington had argued in his 1996 book, which was an expansion of his 1993 article, that "If *civilisation is what counts*, violence between Ukrainians and Russians is unlikely" (emphasis added).[5] Obviously, *it does not*, as the Ukraine conflict leading to the Russian invasion proved.

Without revisiting these debates, and keeping in mind the topic here, I make two points. First, I think Huntington made an important contribution by bringing civilizations into the center stage of the study of world politics, although in a perverse way that he might not have not anticipated in his writings on the subject.

Second, and more importantly, he was wrong about it. The major flaw in his thesis, which few critics have stressed, is its ahistorical nature. Most of his evidence of the clash of civilizations comes from contemporary developments, going back to the past century or so, with some historical presuppositions that are not carefully examined. With its short attention span, the clash of civilization thesis misleadingly privileges conflict over other forms of interactions among civilizations. If one goes back in history to the early days of civilizations and takes a long-term view, a very different, much more complex, picture emerges of how civilizations relate to each other. In so doing, one is likely to find peaceful encounters, exchange of ideas and innovations, mutual learning and hybridity or synthesis, and not just conflict. Throughout history, civilizations have learned from each other and often done so mostly peacefully, without conquest or coercion. This remains the case even today. Without taking these into consideration, one gets a populist and one-sided view of how civilizations have shaped, and will continue to shape, IR and world order.

These points lead to a related question: where do we locate the origins of IR begin from? One of the founding myths of the field of IR was that it was "founded" at the University of Wales in 1919 AD with the creation of a chair in international politics endowed by David Davies, "a wealthy Liberal MP in Wales." Reflecting on the 75th anniversary of this "founding," British Scholar Ken Booth wondered: "what … would the subject look like today … if the subject's origins had derived from the life and work of an admirable black, feminist, medic, she-chief of the Zulus."[6]

[2] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22–49.

[3] Mark Beeson, "Play It again, Sam," *The Conversation*, 15 August 2014, http://theconversation.com/play-it-again-sam-30588; Joshua R. Fattal, "Israel vs. Hamas: A Clash of Civilisations?" *The Huffington Post*, 22 August 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-r-fattal/israel-vs-hamas-a-clash-o_b_5699216.html.

[4] Fouad Ajami, "The Summoning: 'But They Said, We Will Not Hearken,"' *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (September/October 1993), pp. 2–9; Liu Binyan, "Civilisation Grafting: No Culture Is an Island," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (September/October 1993), pp. 19–21.

[5] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[6] Ken Booth, "75 Years On: Rewriting the Subject's Past—Reinventing Its Future," in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 330.

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I would pose a similar but broader question. What if the IR were written not from the perspective of Europe, but from Africa, Asia, Mesoamerica, and the Islamic world? To put it differently, the West today claims its intellectual heritage, including the ideas of politics and IR from the classical Mediterranean world with Greece and Rome at its center. What if one is to develop theories and approaches to politics and IR from the larger and longer historical span of the Indian Ocean world which was shaped by the dynamic interaction of Indians, Chinese, Malays, Arabs, and Africans?

The historical starting point of most studies of IR is the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which also marked the advent of the nation-state. What If IR did not begin from the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 AD, but the Persian King's Peace of 387 BC; what might it tell us about the world? If one studies IR with the nation-state as its core unit of analysis, one has less than 400 years of history to play with. This is also the period of the rise and dominance of the West. What if one studies IR from the perspective of civilizations? Then one has over 5000 years of human history to reflect on and analyze. During the last 5000 years, many civilizations have risen, fallen, and survived. From this long-term historical perspective, no civilization can claim a monopoly over ideas or approaches to peace, security, diplomacy, and development, or related subject matter of IR. Many civilizations have contributed to the substance of what we call IR today, that is to say, relations among nations, societies, war, peace, and cultural encounters. Moreover, a long-term perspective of 5000 years allows us to capture multiple trajectories of interactions among peoples, societies, and states, which cannot be captured by looking at a limited 500 years of history.

A Global IR Perspective

Hence, the study of civilizations is crucial to the efforts to broaden the theories and narratives of IR, by challenging the traditional Eurocentric or Western-centric understanding of IR that is disseminated through most textbooks and learning and training programs in the field. The underlying assumptions of traditional IR can be summed up as follows:

- As a field of study, IR, though founded in the UK, really developed in the USA. Hence, Stanley Hoffman called IR an "American social science."[7]
- IR begins with the Peace of Westphalia (1648) when Europe developed the sovereign nation-state. This also coincided roughly with the rise of the West.
- It is the European state system that expanded to the rest of the world due to European colonialism and decolonization. As non-Western nations became independent, they inherited and adopted European ideas, institutions, and practices.
- The USA as the leading global power entrenched and further expanded the European-derived world order, while American IR scholarship contributed its own distinctive ideas such as that of a liberal international order and hegemonic stability. Whereas Europe managed IR through a balance of power system, the USA did so by constructing an international order (mislabeled as "liberal international order"), which centered on international institutions, albeit created and dominated by the USA.
- The history, culture, ideas, and contributions of non-Western societies played an unimportant or secondary role in the evolution of IR practices and theories. They were norm takers, rather than norm makers, or passive recipients of Western ideas and institutions, rather than active contributors or agents.

In sum, traditional IR suffers from a lack of attention to history, privileging of anarchic systems over hierarchical systems such as empire, and Eurocentrism. Against this understanding, the idea of *Global IR*[8] takes into consideration the voices, experiences,

[7] Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," *Daedalus*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (1977), pp. 41–60.

[8] Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2014), pp. 1–13.

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histories, and contributions of other societies. Global IR draws from the broad canvass of interactions among civilizations, states, and peoples through history, thereby exposing the multiple and worldwide sources of IR. A Global IR approach argues, among other points,[9] that IR was not invented in the West, nor did it begin with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which marked the beginning of the period of Western dominance. Other and older civilizations—e.g. India, China, and Islam—pioneered different international systems and world orders (i.e. how they viewed the world and organized their own foreign relations to achieve stability and progress), and hence their contribution should be part of the study of IR. With the rise of the rest, e.g. China and India, it is even more necessary to pay attention to these other civilizations and their contribution to IR. IR is best understood as the product of interactions and mutual learning between all civilizations and states, even as some have been more powerful than others at different stages in history.

A Global IR requires the foundation of a genuinely global history. History is crucial to broadening the domain of IR with the help of the study of civilizations for a number of reasons. History offers us a range of possibilities when we examine institutions of the past like the hierarchical system, empires, sovereign systems, and the tributary system. I accept Wang Gungwu's argument: "History never really repeats itself and every event when closely examined is different." But "history can teach us about important kind of reality… When enough of the historical is knowable, that might go some way in preparing ourselves for what individuals and societies might do in the future."[10]

History also helps us to test the validity of supposedly universal models. Realists, for instance, tend to think certain manifestations of the international system are timeless. The balance of power theory, for them, goes back to the time of the Greek city-state system and the Roman Republic and has been present in human history since its inception. Does the balance of power really repeat and express itself in other cultures? We can test the universal claims of certain ideas to see whether they actually replicate themselves and if they have been consistent through time and space. A proposition which posits that what happened in

[9] There is now a growing literature on Global IR. Some of the conceptual works on Global IR are the following: Acharya, *Ibid*., pp. 1–13; Amitav Acharya, "Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions and Contributions," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March 2016), pp. 4–15; Thierry Balzacq, Jérémie Cornut, and Frédéric Ramel, "Global International Relations as Alternative to the American Mainstream: The Case of International Relations in France," *Critique Internationale*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (2017), pp. 69–93; Pinar Bilgin, "A Global International Relations Take on the 'Immigrant Crisis,"' TRAFO—Blog for Transregional Research, 2017, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/5699; Antje Wiener, *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Deepshikha Shahi, *Advaita as a Global International Relations Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018); Karin M. Fierke and Vivenne Jabri, "Global Conversations: Relationality, Embodiment and Power in the Move towards a Global IR," *Global Constitutionalism*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (November 2019), pp. 506–35; Yong-Soo Eun, "Global IR *through* Dialogue," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (February 2019), pp. 1–19; Yaqing Qin, ed., *Globalising IR Theory: Critical Engagement* (London: Routledge, 2020); Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt, "Problematising the Global in Global IR," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2020), pp. 32–57; and Amitav Acharya, "What Is 'Global' in Global IR? A Reflective View," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (2023), pp. 73–80. This last article summarizes and responds to some of the criticisms of Global IR. Another direction in the Global IR literature is to provide perspectives from regions or divergent historical and cultural vantage points. See, for example, Paul-Henri Bischoff, Kwesi Aning, and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Africa in Global International Relations: Emerging Approaches in Theory and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Amitav Acharya, Melisa Deciancio, and Diana Tussie, eds., *Latin America in Global International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022); Giovanni Barbieri, "Regionalism, Globalism and Complexity: A Stimulus towards Global IR?" *Third World Thematics*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (2019), pp. 424–41; Morten Valbjørn, "Global/Regional IR and Changes in Global/Regional Structures of Middle East International Relations," *Pomeps Studies*, Vol. 34 (March 2019), pp. 18–22. Lastly, there has been literature that expands and suggests avenues of further development of Global IR. Maiken Gelardi, "Moving Global IR Forward—A Road Map," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 2019), pp. 830–52; Deepshikha Shahi, "One and Many: A Futuristic Foundation of the Global IR Research Programme," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (2023), pp. 64–73; Yong-soo Eun, "Knowledge Production Beyond West-Centrism in IR: Toward Global IR 2.0," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viad015.

[10] Wang Gungwu, "The Universal and the Historical: My Faith in History," Fourth Daisaku Ikeda Annual Lecture, Singapore: Singapore Soka Association, 2005, p. 6.

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certain parts of the world in certain periods of time is a universal pattern cannot be held to be true unless it is put to a historical test. For this, we ought to test such an idea not simply in the context of European history but world history.[11] Does the balance of power really repeat and express itself in other cultures? A historical study finds that while expectations of balancing behavior were borne out in 17th–20th-century Europe, such balancing occurred far less frequently in the non-Western world.[12] Searching for parallels, approximations, similarities, differences, and variations in relation to the core concepts used to study IR allows us to critically examine whether certain concepts and theories are truly universal or not. Concepts thus discovered may not be exactly the same as terms in current use but may help us to ascertain the extent of universality of modern categories such as power, anarchy, order, security, and welfare and add variations to them. Global IR does not reject these concepts. These are useful but they need to be situated within their own context, time, and space. In addition, we need to take ideas and concepts from other parts of the world which have been hitherto unrecognized in the literature on IR. IR has a plethora of concepts that people take to the field and test. Instead of trying to develop entirely new ideas and approaches from one's experience in the field, one might study civilizations and have, for starters, a much broader canvass, laboratory, and wider site for doing empirical research. This can lead to the generation of new theories and not just work that challenges old theoretical frameworks.

But we should avoid two problems when studying history. First, we should avoid historicism, or belief in the continuity of history, or the idea that history repeats itself. Second, we should not engage in backward projection of modern concepts, like sovereignty, power, norms, human rights, democracy, and balance of power, to the past, to establish uniformity, continuity, and universality of modern concepts and theories. These concepts may not exist in the past, or exist in different forms, and may not exist across cultures. This danger is especially great because many of these modern concepts derive from Western societies and experience and the words originate from Greek and Latin (which are now taken to be Western). So backward projection contributes to false universalism and Western ethnocentrism.

A study of classical civilizations and world orders can help IR scholars to more fully engage history and reshape the study of IR theories and concepts in several ways. First, it helps us to understand, and if necessary, challenge, the dominance of certain key ideas that claim to be universal and have been taken for granted as such. This could be key to addressing the problem of Eurocentrism in the discipline: for example, the dominance of Westphalian sovereignty and anarchy which blinds us to other forms of statehood and international order building through history, such as empires or universal monarchy. Second, and conversely, it helps us to illustrate the multiple sources of key ideas: human rights, international law, moral and functional norms, international institutions, and power politics. These concepts that we assume to be derived from European history actually may have other origins, understanding which could make them appreciated as genuinely universal, and hence give them even greater importance and legitimacy. Third, the study of classical civilizations helps discover entirely new ideas, processes, and practices that have been ignored or understudied but are fundamental to understanding how the world works, past, present, and future. Examples of these are the Chinese *Tianxia*, Islam's synthesizing or bridging role between the East and the West, the Sumerian king's role as an arbitrator rather than ruler, and the Indian Maurya King Ashoka's idea of moral conquest. While history may not repeat itself, these ideas and practices might facilitate a better understanding of the behavior of rising powers such as China, India, and Turkey, since their current leaders are invoking the

[11] William Wohlforth et al., "Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2007), pp. 155–85.
[12] *Ibid*.

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past to explain and legitimize their current foreign policy and strategic behavior, which in turn is a key element of contemporary world politics. At the same time, uncovering these ideas and practices enriches the repertoire of theory and method in IR/international studies and comparative politics.

Moreover, studying IR from a historical–civilizational perspective opens the door to understanding both material and ideational relationships among states and societies. It tells us that IR is not always about relationships based on power and wealth. It is also a relationship of different ideas and innovations. Civilizational relationships symbolize the flow of ideas and norms. In IR, we study balance of power, conquests, war, and peace. We do not necessarily study the invention of ideas. The Sumerian invention of the wheel, for instance, might have been as important a breakthrough as the modern automobile, and the Indian numeral system was as important to the classical world as the invention of a computer algorithm in the 20th century. We do not study the flow of ideas as much as the flow of material goods in terms of trade and the relationship between war and peace. From the civilizational perspective, one should study the flow of ideas, both classical and modern. A focus on civilizations helps inject a more ideational component to the study of IR than is the case with traditional IR, which tends to highlight material factors.

Lastly, IR has often been rightly accused of state-centrism. Civilization is a broader category than state. The two are often conflated. Huntington's "clash of civilisations" really meant a clash of states. But the study of civilizations is about the study of interactions among not only states but also societies and cultures. Attention to civilization brings out the fuller richness and complexity of all human interactions than the narrow focus on inter-state relations. It helps us to study non-state and transnational actors and dynamics. As such, it encourages a shift in IR thinking from the conventional state-centric category of the "international system" to the broader framing of world order.

The Concept of World Order

But what is world order? A world order is a political concept that is anchored on a particular civilization or group of civilizations. A world order, as Henry Kissinger defines it, is a "concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world."[13] Going by this definition, a world order is not the same as a global order; it can be regional or national. But most world orders as created by civilizations that, while originating from a single country or region, achieve a transnational or transcontinental reach, whether through material (including conquest and trade) or ideational means. A world order can be developed by any civilization that imagines its ideas and institutions to be universal and timeless. Moreover, a world order is not just about "power" and "just arrangements" that a civilization possesses, as Kissinger stresses, but also, and even more, about its identity and interactions, meaning how civilizations see themselves as distinctive entities and how they interact with other civilizations.

Civilizations are the foundational units of world order, just as nation-states are the basic units of the "international system." The concept of world order is a broader notion than the more familiar idea of an "international system." The latter is the most common term used to study world politics through history. The terms "international system" and "world order" both imply a relationship among states, which is interdependent. There cannot be a system without a certain degree of interaction and interdependence. But the term international system is associated with modern nation-states, although some scholars have applied it to

[13] Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), p. 9.

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study the classical period.[14] The term "world order" does away with the word "international" and helps us analyze a wider range of political systems and the relationship among them.

In using the term "world order," rather than the international system, I follow John K. Fairbank, who coined the term "Chinese World Order."[15] In his view, the term "international system" cannot apply to China before the 20th century because the country had not absorbed the notion of Westphalian sovereignty. Therefore, it would have been misleading to characterize its relationship with its neighbors in terms of an international system.

To elaborate, while the idea of an international system is generally associated with "anarchy," in the sense of having no overriding authority above its units (states), a world order can be either hierarchic, such as an empire, or anarchic, like the Warring States of China, the pre-Maurya republics of India, and the Greek city-states. Moreover, world orders are not static entities; they can move from anarchy to hierarchy just as the swing of a pendulum (to use Adam Watson's phrase), through time.[16] In other words, the same civilization can produce both types of world orders at different times, as happened in ancient Sumer, China, India, and Europe, both before and after Westphalia. The range of political systems and relationships in a world order can be somewhere in between the anarchy–hierarchy continuum, such as the Chinese tributary system, where a leading state maintains a degree of control over other states' domestic and foreign relations but does not take away their sovereignty.

The study of IR suffers from a major blind spot: it considers relatively rare and infrequent domestic and international systems universal, but the most common and recurring systems as particularistic or culturally specific. One should not accept democracy (no matter however one—like this author—admires it) or anarchic systems like the European Westphalian systems (which did have antecedents in the Greek city-state period, the Chinese Warring States period, and the pre-Maurya Indian republican period) as the rule, and hierarchical systems such as monarchy and empire as the exception. Through history, the latter, i.e. empire and monarchy, has been more common than the former. Hence, the concept of world order, which includes both empires or hierarchical systems and anarchic systems, is a more suitable framework for studying classical civilizations and their relevance and legacy for the contemporary world order.

Another difference between the international system and world order may be noted. The idea of an international system privileges a strategic, political, and military relationship between political units. Diplomacy within an international system began more or less in the sphere of war and peace. More recently, people have begun studying economic relationships, but this change came about much later in IR (International Political Economy only became a serious subject in the 1970s) than in other disciplines. Prior to this, IR was essentially a study of diplomacy, war, and peace. Now, on the other hand, we accept economic relationships and trade between states as legitimate areas of study. Similarly, cultural exchanges and the flow of ideas between political units deserve serious examination. Studying IR in terms of world orders, in fact, brings this to the fore. World order is a concept in IR that involves interdependent and interacting political formations except that this is not just interaction among anarchical states which are sovereign and nominally equal to each other but includes hierarchical systems which are empires. World order also gives a central place to cultures, ideas, and identities. The flow of ideas could entail scientific concepts, world views, inventions or innovations, and principles of conduct. This is the essence of

[14] Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[15] John King Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

[16] Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (London: Routledge, 1992).

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studying civilizations. The idea of world order is more ideational and inclusive of different models than the concept of an international system.

This essay focuses on five such world orders that made their mark before the "rise of the West" or the advent of European colonialism around roughly the 16th century AD: Near Eastern, Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and Indian Oceanic. This in no way implies that there were no other civilizations and world orders worthy of our consideration before the rise of the West. There are indeed several others who played a major role in the march of human civilization in the classical age: the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Mongols, Malay-Javanese, and the pre-Columbian civilization s of the Americas, such as the Mayas, Aztecs, Incas, and others. Of these, the civilizations of Greece and Rome are well studied and will be brought in as a point of comparison and illustration of Eurocentrism in the study of civilizations. I hope that this will inspire a greater focus on the other civilizations that created world orders and deserve to be seriously studied for their relevance for and contribution to modern IR/international studies. Some of their contributions would be the political organization and commercial achievements of the pre-Columbian civilizations, such as the Incas, who had the world's largest empire before the Spanish conquest, or the extensive and pacified line of communication built by the Mongols over Eurasia, the Malay world's contribution to ocean-faring and long-distance commerce, and the religious and cultural tolerance, administrative organization, and transport system of the Persian civilization.

World orders vary in terms of their power structure, physical size/scope, coherence, degree of centralization, organizational principles and institutions and norms. In Table 1, using power structure, size, and coherence as a key variable, I identify five main types of world orders: tightly polycentric, loosely centered, tightly centered, loosely polycentric, and decentered. In Table 2, I further differentiate among them in terms of power and degree of centralization (anarchy/heirarchy), organizing principles and institutions and norms.

After discussing the five world orders, I conclude this essay with a brief discussion of how they contributed to the rise of the West, in which the European and American World Orders feature centrally. The rise of the West was made possible by borrowing the ideas and innovations of China, India, and Islam, and their subsequent suppression by European imperial expansion. It is far from my intention here to selectively emphasize only the greatness or benign features of non-Western civilizations, while disparaging those of the West. No civilization is entirely peaceful or virtuous. Each possesses both attraction and ugliness. Like the West, non-Western civilizations have practiced colonialism, racism, violence, repression, and genocide. Some analysts draw a distinction between European and non-European colonialism, with the former anchored in a capitalist economy that magnified its long-term effects.[17] Some argue that Western imperialism has probably more to do with the invention of modern racism than any prior imperialism. The growing totality of war is also seen by some as a distinct byproduct of the rise of the West, especially its nationalism, military technology, and colonial competition. At the same time, Western colonialism has its supporters, who point to its benefits for "backward" races, such as the railways, telecommunication, centralized administration, and modern medicine, even though these benefits, as in India's case, were originally meant to primarily serve the needs of colonial administration. Yet, much has been written about the greatness of the Western civilization. My goal here is to focus on some of the contributions of non-Western civilizations that have remained relatively unknown, especially to students of politics and IR. Moreover, I do not glorify Eastern ideas and institutions. For example, I do not claim that universal monarchy is a more successful form of polity than a democracy because I admire the former more, but because it is borne out by historical evidence.

[17] Randolph Persaud and Alina Sajed, "Introduction," in Randolph Persaud and Alina Sajed, eds., *Race, Culture and Gender in International Relations: Postcolonial Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 3–4.

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Table 1. Types of World Order

Classical Near East	Tightly polycentric	The main power centers were in Sumer, Akkad, Egypt, Assyria, Hittites, Babylon, and Persia. These were not always contemporaneous or synchronous, except in Egypt and Sumer until the early 2nd millennium BC. While some power centers then rose in succession, sometimes defeating an existing center, there was much interaction among the societies. There was no clear hegemony during the time of contemporaneous great powers of the Amarna period even though Egypt got deference.
Ancient India	Loosely centered	India is so named because of the non-hereditary republics that dotted the landscape before the Maurya empire, and even continued to exist since. The Gupta ruled with a light empire that gave much autonomy to constituents.
Ancient China	Tightly centered	China started as a hierarchical order with Shang and especially Zhou, who retained a nominal primacy even during the "anarchic" Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. After the Qin prevailed, China remained deeply hierarchical despite periodic imperial breakups or interruptions, with a recurring tendency toward unification, with an independent state system viewed as aberration, while imperial unity was the norm.
Islam	Loosely polycentric	Coming out of the ashes of the classical Near East world order, the Islamic world order similarly had both asynchronous and synchronous centers or empires. Empires did rise in succession and some rose by conquering existing centers of power. However, it should be noted that the Abbasid takeover of Umayyads did not extinguish the latter which moved to Spain (Al-Andalus). Spreading over a much larger area, the Islamic world order was generally more polycentric although sharing the same religion than the ancient Near East. A good example of a synchronous polycentric Islamic world order would be the gunpowder empires of Ottomans, Moghuls, and Safavids, which did not encroach into each other.
Indian Ocean	Decentered	The Indian Ocean saw no exclusive, single or collective, hegemony over its the vast maritime domain; the control of which was seen as beyond the territorial jurisdiction of states. Yet, trade and cultural interactions flourished through this maritime space. The Indian Ocean trading network stretching from East Africa to the Indonesian archipelago might be seen as one of the powerful sources of the modern doctrine of freedom of seas.

Classical Near East

The Sumerians pioneered the first major world order between the 4th and 3rd millennium BC (about 3500 BC until 2000 BC).[18] The Sumerian order, christened as the "great society" by William McNeill,[19] was a decentered system of independent city-states, under a shifting leadership (or collective hegemony). The great kingship over all the city-states was not that of an emperor; its main function was to arbitrate among fellow rulers. When the great king failed to perform his duties, the other states joined hands, brought him down, and selected

[18] Persaud and Sajed, "Introduction," pp. 3–4.

[19] William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), chapter 2.

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Table 2. Characteristics of World Orders

World order	Anarchic forms	Hierarchic forms	Key organizing principles and institutions	Norms
Near East	The Sumerian city-states	First empires Sargon of Akkad, Assyria, and Persia	Egyptian divine kingship	Amarna Great power cooperation; first peace treaty (Kadesh)
India	*Ganasanghas* (*Gana*: people, *sanghas*: assemblies)—between 600 BC and 500 AD, these were clan-based republics with elected, rather than hereditary rulers	*Chakravartin*: the idea of a universal emperor, after the Maurya empire. Decentered empire under Guptas	The first social contract theory of state from Buddhism: Great Elect to limit conflict and maintain justice Replacing the original state of harmony From Kautilya's *Arthashastra* came the first description of the elements of state and the "circle of states")	*Dharma* (Righteousness)—formulated by King Ashoka (268–232 BC), it is a source of idealist and humanist thought stressing moral order, abstinence from war, and protection of the people from cruel and unjust rule
China	Warring states, a system of competing polities each seeking hegemony despite being under the nominal suzerainty of the Zhou	Centralized empire from Qin to Qing despite periodic divisions (e.g. southern song) and rupture	Tributary system from Han but fully developed under Ming and Qing	*Tianxia* (All under Heaven) under Zhou Confucian ideals of harmony benevolence, rule by virtue, and leading by example Daoist ideals of "simplicity, balance, and restraint"
Islam	Rising and falling imperial polities Abbasid, Umayyad, Fatimid, Moghul, Ottoman, and Safavid dynasties	Overall a polycentric and multinational international system	Although not founding principles of Islam, it later developed divisions of world into Dar al-Islam (realm of Islam), or space ruled by Muslims; and Dar al-Harb (realm of war), or space ruled by non-Muslims, seen as possible targets of conquest	Ummah (community of believers) and *asabiyya* (community feeling): both reject of secular and sovere ign Westphalian state model Dar al-Ahad (realm of treaties and coexistence)
Indian Ocean	Regional empires, trading states, independent merchant guilds, monasteries	No single empire dominated the litoral or maritime space	Cultural diversity (Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic), economic connectivity, ideational diffusion	Open seas (freedom of seas)

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another ruler. So the ruler's legitimacy depended not on force, but the legitimacy of his role as a dispute-settler.

Let me pose a question that is often lost in contemporary debates over the West and the Rest: what is history's most successful political institution? The answer is not the Greek polis or "democracy," but the Sumerian and Egyptian institution of divine kingship. Greek "democracy" was neither complete nor exportable. Braudel estimates that in 431 BC, out of a total population of 315 000 in Attica (a historical region surrounding Athens), 172 000 were citizens. Out of this, 40 000 were male citizens,[20] the only group that had the right to vote. The rest were foreigners ("metics") and slaves. It seems that Alexander the Great, the most famous pupil of Aristotle, was sufficiently enamored of Eastern practices, rather than political arrangements favored by his teacher, to anoint himself as the Pharaoh of Egypt and the Great King of Persia, following his conquest of these two lands.[21]

The Mesopotamian cultures, including later-day Assyria and Babylon and the Egyptians were linked through time and space; especially during the Amarna system of the 14th century BC. In this system, the great powers of the period, Egypt, Hatti, the Kassite kingdom of Babylon, Assyria, and Mittani, formed a club of local powers that utilized diplomacy, communications (though a common Akkadian language), gift exchanges, and marriages to maintain stability and order. The Amarna order points to the possibility of major powers existing alongside each other without the need for any one of those powers to act as a hegemon.

The modern West appropriated Greek civilization as its own precursor while ignoring Greece's Asiatic debts and linkages. In reality, classical Greece was a Mediterranean civilization, not a Western or European civilization, in the sense that most of its initial and abundant cultural borrowings came from the areas in the Mediterranean and Asiatic littoral, rather than from Western Europe. It was only after the Renaissance that Greece became integral to the idea of the West, constructed by a rising Europe in search of a historical identity.[22] In fact, the Greeks considered all non-Greek-speaking peoples, including their Western and northern neighbors as "barbarians." Most of the early scientific and philosophical achievements of Greece occurred in the Asiatic part, which was closer to ancient civilizations of Near East, Egypt, Sumer, and Persia. For example, the "pioneering chemistry in Babylon, medicine in Egypt, and astronomy in Mesopotamia" were all influenced by Greece. Thales, an astronomer, traveled to Egypt to learn geometry and astronomy.[23] One of the key achievements of Greek rationality is the "demystification of the sacred,"[24] but it also existed independently in ancient India.

Moreover, the Greek city-state system was not an autonomous system, but a Greco-Persian system, shaped by the Persian Wars from 499 BC to 450 BC and the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC).[25] Greek city-states like Corinth and Sparta invoked Persia's help as an offshore balancer. After conquering the Asiatic Greek colonies (in Ionia and Anatolia), Persia aspired to conquer the European part of Greece. But the Persian forces of Xerxes were defeated at the Battle of Marathon in 480 BC by an alliance of Greek states. But the battle of Marathon did not end Persian involvement in Greek affairs. Sparta sought and received Persian aid to build its navy to defeat Athens in the Peloponnesian War. As Braudel writes, "… contrary to what the historians keep saying, the Persian wars were not won by

[20] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World* (New York: Penguin, 2002), p. 272.

[21] British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), "Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), "https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/alexander_the_great.shtml.

[22] As Braudel pointed out, "the place that 'the Greek miracle' holds in our modern western world results from the need for every civilisation or human group to choose its origins, to invent forefathers of whom it can be proud. Belief in this ancestry has become a virtual necessity." Braudel, *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*, p. 259.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 289.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*.

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the Greeks; their real conclusion came in 404 [BC] with the fall of Athens, which was the work of Persian gold rather than of the Peloponnesian armies."[26] Many Greek city-states sided with Persia and preferred it to the Athenian (or Spartan) hegemony, as Persian rule was more loose and respected local autonomy and it expanded trade with the help of the empire's extensive roadways and transport system. Persian King Artaxerxes II negotiated the "King's Peace" in 387 BC. It included universal peace and independence of Greek city-states, including Athens and Sparta. The King's Peace was underwritten by Persian subsidies (accepted by both Athens and Sparta) and military power.

The Indian World Order

The first recorded "Indian" civilization flourished in the Indus Valley (now straddling Pakistan and India) between 4000 BC to 1900 BC. It was perhaps the world's first urban civilization, a hydraulic (water-based) civilization with public baths and covered sewers, a commercial entity with the standardization of weights and measures, and a society of equals which has left no evidence of great temples, palaces, rich burial places, monuments, or prestige objects.[27]

The world order of ancient India was also both anarchic and hierarchic (as was Greece's during Athenian hegemony). Before and even during and after the Maurya Empire (321–185 BC), India had a decentralized system of polities, including republics, monarchies, and empires. Sometimes, republics coexisted even with empires.[28] The republics were small in size, oligarchic, and power was not vested in all residents but wielded by clans; decisions were made by consensus or voting; and rulers were chosen among clans, rather than by heredity. Slavery was mainly for domestic purposes, rather than production. The Roman Republic and the Greek city-state system also had limited citizenship, oligarchic rule, and slavery. The Indian republics created alliances to wage war and conduct foreign affairs. They rejected Vedic religion and rituals.

Ancient Indian philosophy and statecraft contained elements of both idealism and realism. Kautilya, Minister to the founding Mauryan emperor Chandragupta, wrote Arthashastra ("The Science of Material Gain"). It prescribes "completely practical and unsentimental"[29] policies to conquer enemies, expand territory, and manage empire, including through such means as war, assassinations, spying, etc. The thoughts of Kautilya and Machiavelli share many similarities, but Kautilya makes the rules accountable for the happiness of the people. Arthashastra was also the first treatise in the world that clearly enumerated the key components of a state: namely Svami (the king), Amatya (ministers), Janapada (the territory), Durga (a fortified capital), Kosha (the treasury), Danda (justice or force), and Mitra (ally). And his "Mandala" theory ("circle of Kings" or "circle of states") prescribed the position and policy of amity and enmity for an aspiring conqueror. It was Kautilya who thus gave expression to the doctrine: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

While Kautilya marked the high point of ancient realism and rationalism, the idealism and moral statecraft of ancient India were epitomized by King Ashoka. Ashoka was the third Emperor of the Maurya Dynasty who ruled between 269 and 232 BC. After the Kalinga War, circa 261 BC, in which 100 000 died and 150 000 people were taken as prisoners, he converted to Buddhism and never waged war again. Instead, he pursued moral conquest and humanitarianism, called Dharma (*Dhamma*), or Law of Piety or righteousness. It signifies "a sense of universality of affection for all people – an early form of humanitarianism which

[26] Braudel, *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*, p. 256.
[27] John Haywood, *The Ancient World* (New York: Metro Books, 2010), p. 58.
[28] Ram Lingam, "And You Thought Only Modern India Was a Republic," last updated January 2012, http://www.esamskriti.com/essay-chapters/And-you-thought-only-modern-India-was-a-republic-1.aspx.
[29] Cristian Violatti, "Arthashastra," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, 6 April 2014, https://www.ancient.eu/Arthashastra/.

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is not limited to war."[30] In a network of righteous relationships, "no one was outside its ambit, not even Asoka or the Empress: censors were appointed to ensure that the Law of Piety was observed even in the latter's apartments in the Palace. The Law of Piety was a moral law, an imperial law, a law governing foreign relations and a way of life."[31]

Three aspects of Ashoka's Dharma[32] may be noted. The first concernes the relations between the ruler and the subjects. One of Ashoka's inscriptions reads: "All men are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, that I desire for all men." The second aspect concernes the relations with neighboring states, as stipulated in another inscription: "The people of the unconquered territories beyond the borders might think: 'What is the king's intentions towards us?' My only intention is that they live without fear of me, that they may trust me and that I may give them happiness, not sorrow."[33]

Third, King Ashoka can also be credited with an ancient doctrine of human rights (which might have its origins also in the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great's policy of religious tolerance). According to King Ashoka, "While being completely law-abiding, some people are imprisoned, treated harshly and even killed without cause so that many people suffer … the judicial officers of the city may strive to do their duty and that the people under them might not suffer unjust imprisonment or harsh treatment."[34]

It is from India, especially Buddhism, that one gets the earliest social contract theory of the origin of the state.[35] It includes an original state of harmony, decay, competition for satisfying basic needs to private property, disputes, need for law, and controlling authority. The elected authority (Great Elect) rules and maintains justice.[36] The Buddhist philosophy values ideas about causality. The Doctrine of Emptiness ("Sunyata") and "dependent origination" (originating from the Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna from the 2nd century AD) tell us that there is no such thing as a permanent reality, or that anything considered real is not absolute or permanent, but is relative, conditional, and constantly evolving.[37] Hence, "causation implies contingency and dependence, while anything that inherently existed would be immutable and self-enclosed."[38] This combines both rationality and relationality as could be found in today's constructivist IR theory, which holds that conditions like peace, war, and anarchy are not permanent or given, but result from interactions among individuals, states, and societies. Moreover, they can thus change over time. As Wendt put it, "Anarchy is what states make of it."[39]

Indian philosophy does not sharply define the epistemological distinction between the this-worldly and the other-worldly. It is a powerful reminder that all civilizations are known for their plurality and contradictions and we may stereotype them only at our own peril. To sum up, ancient Greece was less democratic and rationalistic than is given credit for, while India was more democratic and pluralistic than commonly believed. Indian systems of thought combined both rationalism and spiritualism (as did Greek thought).

[30] Gerald Draper, "The Contribution of the Emperor Asoka Maurya to the Development of the Humanitarian Ideal in Warfare," *International Review of the Red Cross*,, Vol. 35, No. 305 (30 April 1995), https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/article/other/57jmf2.htm.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] Ven. S. Dhammika, "The Edicts of King Ashoka," https://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 149.

[36] *Ibid*., pp. 149–50.

[37] Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality* (New York: Morgan Road Books, 2005), pp. 47, 66–7.

[38] Gajin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*: *A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies: Collected Papers*, trans. Leslie S. Kawamura (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 174–5.

[39] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

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Indian thinking on world order can also be discerned from epics such as *the Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, epics that also had a major influence in shaping culture and politics in Southeast Asia. The *Mahabharata* tells us of the rivalry between the just and virtuous *Pandava* brothers and their cousins the *Kauravas*, whose greed far exceeds their sense of righteousness. It is a feast of narratives about statecraft, diplomacy, conspiracy, heroism, friendship, and betrayal. No ancient epic provides a richer source of insights into the causes of war, the conduct of negotiations, and the role of honor, justice, and morality in conflict and peace. On the other hand, *the Ramayana*, the epic about the virtuous Prince Rama and his battle against and ultimate defeat of forces of darkness led by King Ravana, is more about righteousness, justice, and ideal rule, especially with the concept of *Ramarajya* (the state of Rama). These epics, as well as the *Code of Manu*, and the *Vedas* and *Upanishadas* (Hindu texts on philosophy), offer plenty of examples of a civilization that combined rationalism and transcendentalism.

Finally, India offers perhaps the best example in history of the peaceful diffusion of ideas. One might compare the "Hellenization" (the spread of Greek ideas and institutions) in the Western Mediterranean and West Asia with the "Indianization" (spread of Indian ideas and institutions) in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Northeast Asia, especially China. Hellenization was marked by conquest (Alexander in Egypt and Asia) or displacement of native peoples (Greek city-states in Sicily). Indianization was peacefully accomplished without such displacement. Hellenization was carried out by the Greeks and benefited the Greek settlers, and it was for, by, and of the Greeks. Indianization was through voluntary initiative of local societies and rulers. It benefited and legitimized local rulers and advanced local societies. It was for, by, and of the local societies. Hellenization often meant imposition of Greek culture, ideas, and institutions. Indianization often meant selective adaptation (rather than wholesale adoption) of Indian culture, ideas, and institutions by local societies in accordance with their prior beliefs, practices, and needs. Indianization had a more lasting impact on receiving societies than Hellenization.

A study of the classical Indian civilization tells us that anarchy–hierarchy dichotomy is an inadequate way of analyzing classical international systems. It focuses on structure but does not tell us about the content or the ideational elements of the system, or the moral purpose of the states and the international system. Another way to analyze international systems would be along the realpolitik–normative spectrum. The Indian world order was perhaps more normative (prescriptive, how domestic politics and foreign policy ought to be organized) than that of Greece, Rome, and China. But the orientalist view of ancient India as the antithesis of Greece/the West, or despotic, mystical, imperial, and other-worldly, is misleading. It was fundamentally eclectic, combining rationalism–spiritualism, realism–idealism, republicanism–monarchy, and anarchic and hierarchic orders.

Is the classical Indian world order making a comeback? India is widely regarded today as an emerging world power, set to become the world's most populous country and the second-largest economy after China. India is also asserting itself on the international stage, with a powerful navy plying the Indian Ocean, and exercising influence and leadership in international negotiations and organizations. The present Indian ruling party led by Narendra Modi is fond of invoking the country's traditional principles, both idealistic and realist. But this need not mean a revival of India's past. Where the past might play a role is in keeping India pluralistic. As a civilization of India has been more "open" to external currents than the civilizations of China and Islam, the two other world orders examined here. This pluralism may challenge India's internal stability and coherence, but it also sustains its democracy, and any quest by India for global or regional dominance.

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The Chinese World Order

There are five major conceptual and institutional foundations of the Chinese World Order which may be briefly noted. The first, Mandate of Heaven, is a concept from the Zhou dynasty (1026–256 BC). The ruler, the Son of Heaven, receives the right to rule from Heaven (Tian, who was the main god of the Zhou). If the ruler was not wise and just and ignored the welfare of the people, Heaven would send warnings in the form of a natural disaster, or eclipse, or a peasant rebellion. If the ruler did not change his way, Heaven would withdraw its mandate and his right to rule. The Mandate of Heaven was used by the Zhou dynasty founder Wu to justify the overthrow of the Shang dynasty's last ruler Di Xin. The Mandate of Heaven was a double-edged sword. Rulers could use it to suppress any rebellion as an act against the will of the Heaven. But it could also be used to justify rebellion against the ruler in the pretext that he was cruel and unjust. If the rebellion succeeded, it could be presented as evidence that the ruler had lost the Mandate.

The second Chinese concept to be discussed here is *Tianxia* (*All under Heaven*). It goes back to the Zhou dynasty of China (beginning in the 11th century BC) and literally means the earth or all lands under the sky. It has been applied by Chinese scholars (especially Zhao Tingyang) to understand contemporary world order.[40] In this view, *Tianxia* rejects the Westphalian model and blames it for problems of conflict and state failure. Instead, it sees the highest unit as the "world," not the "state." It envisages "a political system for the world with a global institution to ensure universal order," which would "reconstitute the world along the lines of the family, thereby transforming the world into a home for all peoples." Furthermore, such a world order would be "characterized by harmony and cooperation without hegemony."[41]

Chinese views of world order were also influenced by *Confucianism* and *Daoism*. Confucianism is a philosophical and political doctrine that stresses the essential goodness of human nature, the importance of tradition, and especially of mutual respect and obligations between ruler and ruled, similar to between parents and children, teacher and pupil, master and discipline, and between friends. It is based on the Mandate of Heaven: the ruler is responsible for people's welfare and maintenance of peace and order in exchange for their loyalty and obedience. The ruler and elites set examples for the common man. The world is ruled by virtuous people only, and a social hierarchy based on merit would inspire trust and confidence in the ruler and lead to peace and happiness.

Confucianism was expanded by other philosophers, especially Mencius, and influenced by Daoism (Laozi) by incorporating "simplicity, balance, restraint, and the avoidance of activity and desire as a way to achieve harmony with the Dao (Way), a metaphysical concept of fundamental reality that can only be understood intuitively or mystically."[42] Like the Mandate of Heaven, Confucianism was both legitimizing and delegitimizing. The ruler's legitimacy was conditional upon just and wise exercise of authority that served people's welfare and happiness. So while elitist and not democratic, it was not an absolute justification for authoritarian rule either.

Legalism is another crucial conceptual foundation of the Chinese World Order. Compared to idealist Confucianism, Legalism is realist. Legalism stressed the overriding need for power and order. It rejected Confucianism's emphasis on tradition, humanity, ruling by virtue, benevolence, leading by example, and the idea of ruler's obligation to people. It believes that human nature is inherently wicked. It emphasized rule by a code of law

[40] Zhao Tingyang, "Yi Tianxia chongxin dingyi zhengzhi gainian: wenti, tiaojian he fangfa [Redefining the Concept of Politics via 'Tianxia': The Problems, Conditions and Methodology]," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [*World Economics and Politics*], No. 6 (2015), pp. 4–22; Zhao Tingyang, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-Heaven (Tian-Xia)," *Diogenes*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (2009), pp. 5–18.

[41] Zhang Feng, "The *Tianxia* System: World Order in a Chinese Utopia," *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 21 (March 2010), http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tien-hsia.php?searchterm=021_utopia.inc&issue=021.

[42] John Haywood, *The Ancient World* (New York: Metro Books, 2010), p. 106.

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strictly enforced by force and harsh punishment. It discouraged scholarship and carried out burning of books. The self-strengthening reforms of Legalist principles, especially under the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC), fortified agriculture, trade, and military service to create a centralized, efficient, and absolutist state. It standardized weights and measures in China and developed a centralized and disciplined bureaucracy—a lasting legacy for Chinese history.

Finally, the Chinese World Order was profoundly shaped by the tributary system.[43] It started from the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) and ended with the Qing Dynasty (established in 1644). It is a hierarchical system with China at the center. It is a suzerainty rather than a sovereignty system. The tributary system is based on mutual benefit: tributary states acknowledged China's superiority and received the right to trade with China and access to the large and lucrative Chinese market. Those sending tribute received from the Chinese emperor gifts of higher value than they presented him. It is also a system of international recognition. Some rulers in Asia used the system to their advantage to gain recognition as the legitimate ruler in domestic succession squabbles and occasionally secure protection from predatory neighbors. For example, the tributary state of Malacca sought Chinese protection against Siam in the 15th century AD.

The working of the tributary system, especially its claim to be a relatively benign or non-coercive order, has been a subject of debate and controversy. One could say that it was a non-hegemonic system or at most a benign hegemony that allowed states to submit without being subjugated. China did not undertake large-scale colonization of foreign lands like the Europeans did after the 15th century AD. Against this view, one could point to the Chinese colonization of Vietnam in the 1st millennium AD and its conquest of kingdoms and peoples to the southwest (Nanzhao, Dali). In reality, China used both persuasion and coercion when it suited its purpose. The use of force and coercion in Roman imperialism was far greater than that under the Chinese tributary system.

To sum up, China had both idealist thought (Tianxia; Confucianism) and realist thought (Legalism). The transition from the Warring States to Qin Dynasty in 221 BC gives insights into how an anarchic system becomes an empire through self-strengthening reforms (by Qin) and power of ideas (Legalism) and why the balance of power does not always work to prevent empire. It challenges the balance of power theory by arguing that balancing is not automatic or inevitable and can fail under certain conditions. Between anarchy and hegemony, there is a hierarchical international system (the tributary system), in which a leading power (China) can offer the benefits of trade, recognition, and protection without colonizing other states.

Just as the Arabs pioneered globalization, the Chinese, through their inventions and commerce, pioneered the world's first industrial revolution. Printing, gunpowder, and the compass, which British intellectual Francis Bacon considers as the three most important inventions behind modern civilization,[44] all came from China. Chinese agricultural production in the 12th century was equivalent to European agricultural production in the 20th century. China was home to the world's "first industrial miracle," thanks to a number of contributions. The first was its invention of iron and steel (600–1100 AD), not just for weapons and decorative art, but also for everyday use. The second was its transport revolution which included the Grand Canal (5th century BC–7th century AD) and petroleum. China discovered petroleum as a source of energy. Through its invention and usage of paper and printing and its system of taxation, China created one of the earliest prototypes of a commercialized knowledge economy, with low taxes, widespread use of paper money, and book publishing. China's military revolution that happened in 850–1290 AD was spearheaded by the invention of gunpowder, which was not for toys but for war materiel such as rocket launchers, bombs, grenades, and land and sea mines. China also had a 20 000-ship

[43] Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order.*

[44] Francis Bacon, *Bacon's Novum Organum* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1889).

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Sung Navy. Its contribution to navigation and shipbuilding can be seen from the fact that in 1588 AD, while the largest English ship carried 400 tons, earlier Chinese junks carried over 3000 tons.

In the 15th century, Chinese Muslim Admiral Zheng He's voyages through Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean were a demonstration of Chinese military power. While it had coercive purposes, the main goal was to stabilize China's tributary system, rather than seize territory or create an outright system of imperialism over Southeast Asia.[45] Comparing the Roman Imperium (empire) and the Chinese tributary system, the former directly conquered and ruled over the entire Mediterranean, while the latter utilized very little direct conquest or colonization. The Romans were the main beneficiaries of their empire, but the tributary system was more mutually beneficial. In the Mediterranean, public goods such as trade and security required a hegemonic power (Rome), while in the Indian Ocean trade flourished and security was maintained without a hegemonic power.

What about China's past shaping its present and future? As China grows rapidly in wealth and military power, becoming the world's largest economy and second-biggest military power after the USA, there has been much talk and concern in the West about a revival of the Chinese tributary system. This is fueled by recent efforts by Chinese scholars to invoke the *Tianxia* concept as the basis for a new Chinese foreign policy.[46] But concerns about a modern Chinese tributary order are unfounded. China's influence is constrained by the countervailing influence of other major powers: Japan, the USA, Russia, and India. China itself now subscribes to the principle of non-intervention, which, though diluted, still remains important to its foreign policy approach. China's wealth gives it an ability to realize its domestic and foreign policy goals without resorting to military force or hegemony. While *Tianxia* is a legitimizing concept for China, its application to the contemporary world, as that of the tributary system, is fraught with obstacles and potential for blowback that would prevent the reemergence of a Chinese World Order except in a limited sense.

The Islamic World Order

The key concepts in the Islamic worldview are sometimes thought to be so different from contemporary concepts in IR that they cannot be fitted into existing theories of politics and IR. Some argue that Islam has to be treated "as a paradigm of international theory in its own right." Islamic IR theory is a "systemic theory, not of how states interact with each other or how the system affects the state, but it is rather a concept of world order that focuses on the relations between the Muslim/Arab and the non-Muslim/Arab sphere and how that realm should be ordered."[47] Islamic theology makes a distinction between the Islamic State (Dar al-Islam) and the outside world (Dar al-Harb). Dar al-Islam refers to "the realm of Islam, that is the geographical space ruled by a Muslim in accordance with Islamic principles." Dar al-Harb is "the realm of war, the geographical space not ruled by Muslims." The Islamic conception of state is very different from the idea of the nation-state and Westphalian sovereignty. There are tensions between the idea of the nation-state and sovereignty and the concept of *Umma* (community of believers) and *asabiyya* (community feeling), e.g. Arab nations (Pan-Arabism) versus sovereign Arab states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia.[48]

But Islam has never been a singular, internally homogeneous civilization. Moreover, like the civilizations of India, China, and the West, it never rejected ideas from other civilizations,

[45] John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 68–70.

[46] One such attempt is by Chinese scholar Tingyang, "Redefining the Concept of Politics via 'Tianxia,"' pp. 4–22.

[47] John Turner, "Islam as a Theory of International Relations?" *E-International Relations Students*, 3 August 2009, http://www.e-ir.info/2009/08/03/islam-as-a-theory-of-international-relations/.

[48] *Ibid*.

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but incorporated them. Furthermore, Islam represents one of the most dynamic civilizations that have acted as the world's hub for the transmission of commerce, culture, and knowledge.

Islam, which Braudel calls as a "successor civilisation"[49] to those of the Near East, also acted as a bridge between the ancient and the modern, and between the East and the West. Intellectuals and texts who survived the destruction of the library in Alexandria and other centers of classical knowledge found their way to the Abbasid Caliphate. The "House of Wisdom" (Arabic: Bayt al-Hikma) was founded in the 8th century AD under Abbasid Caliphate rulers. Its scholarly contribution, in addition, is immense. Scholars studied mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, zoology, and geography. There were also drawings on Persian, Indian, and Greek texts such as those by Aristotle, Plato, Hippocrates, Euclid, Pythagoras, and others. It was considered as "the greatest collection of knowledge in the world."[50]

The Muslim world got from China the technique of paper-making 400 years earlier than non-Muslim Europe and, through this, started a great diffusion of knowledge from the East to Europe. The city of Cordoba in Spain under Islamic rule was a flourishing center for the exchange of knowledge, with a library that had 400 000 volumes, "more books than all the libraries of the rest of Europe put together."[51] "Many of the traits on which modern Europe prides itself came to it from Muslim Spain. Diplomacy, free trade, open borders, the techniques of academic research, of anthropology, etiquette, fashion, various types of medicine, hospitals, all came from this great city of cities."[52] The Caliphate in Spain undertook translations of Arabic texts (some of which were earlier translated from Greek and other languages in Baghdad at places like the House of Wisdom), which directly influenced the Renaissance in Europe.

Islamic scientists and philosophers did not just *preserve* Greek knowledge as a library might, but actively *advanced* it through interpretation, refutation, and reformulation. For example, Islamic scientists stressed the use of instruments, methods, and experimentation, which were a weak point of Greek science. The Baconian idea that science should be based on experimentation was presaged by Islamic science. In terms of the relations between Islamic science and rise of the West, Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) Cannon of Medicine became the "founding text for European schools of medicine"; Al-Razi, the father of modern medicine and clinical pharmacology, introduced quarantine; Ibn al-Shatir of the Maragha School developed mathematical models that influenced Copernicus's heliocentric theory 150 years later; and Al-Khwarizmi improved upon Ptolemy's Geography and produced new maps showing positions of stars. He also calculated the circumference of the Earth to within a margin of error of less than 0.04%.[53]

The "rational Islamic theology" includes the idea of Ijtihad, "God could only be comprehended through unaided and individualistic human reason."[54] Al-Kindi, al-Razi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, and al-Zahrawi were all counter to the prevailing "Catholic belief in the authority of the divine" and stressed "the centrality of the individual."[55] Ibn Rushd expounded the "Eternity Principle" which held that both time and matter were eternal. Arabs like him did not think there to be any contradiction between religion and philosophy.

[49] Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilisations* (New York: Penguin, 1993), chapter 4.

[50] "Centuries in the House of Wisdom," *The Guardian*, 22 September 2004, http://www.theguardian.com/education/2004/sep/23/research.highereducation1.

[51] Charles (Prince of Wales), "Islam and the West," A Lecture Given in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993, http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/media/speeches/speech-hrh-the-prince-of-wales-titled-islam-and-the-west-the-oxford-centre-islamic.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, pp. 178–80.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[55] *Ibid.*

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Greek knowledge was restored to Europe by the Arabs' serious treatment and popularization of natural philosophy. Later, many of these ideas were translated into Latin after the Fall of Spanish Toledo from Muslim hands to Christians in 1000 AD. This fed into the Renaissance. Also, Italians learned some Asian ideas directly through their participation in the Crusades. But once it acquired Eastern ideas and technologies, the Renaissance "turned it back on the Orient."[56]

As a bridge of the world, Islam connects Western Europe (Spain) with India and China in the East. Islam was not a desert but an urban civilization. It is not anti-rationalist, but has a keen sense for trade (Prophet was a trader) and rational capitalist activity. Muslim traders created a network of trade and linked civilizations from Europe and North Africa to Asia. Muslim traders came up with innovations such as the lateen sail for long-distance trading, the astrolabe for navigation, chemicals for navigation, iron and steel production, sugar refinement, energy through windmills and water mills, and capitalist institutions, e.g. partnerships, contract law, banking, and credit. Long-distance trade was developed and controlled first by Arabs, then Egypt, and then the Ottomans. Venice and Genoa profited from global trading controlled by Middle Eastern Muslims and especially the Egyptians.[57]

The sources of Islamic thought, such as the Quran and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet), are subject to interpretation. Much recent attention has been given to Islam's concept of *Jihad* which to many suggests the inevitability of conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. But the idea of Jihad as holy war (which was regarded as a misinterpretation of Islamic theology by Averroes) is now being challenged by non-traditionalist Islamic intellectuals. The latter do not take the division of the world into *Dar al-Harb* and *Dar al-Islam* as absolute, nor do they accept its applicability to the contemporary times. Instead, they see a third way, *Dar al-Ahd* (realm of treaties), which suggests peace and coexistence with the non-Muslim world.[58]

The "clash of civilisations" thesis proposed by Samuel Huntington, which has been taken by many analysts and policymakers in the West as presaging serious confrontation, especially between Western and Islamic civilizations, not only presents a one-sided view of the encounter among civilizations, but it also ignores the fact that Islam has adapted and is now adapting to the norms and principles of world politics.[59] Hence, although the institution of the Westphalian sovereign state is sometimes viewed by some Islamic authorities as a temporary legacy of Western colonialism, it has proven to be resilient. The idea of an Arab nation once pursued with vigor by radical regimes, like Egypt's Nasser or Libya's Gaddafi, is dead now. Similarly, the idea of an Islamic Caliphate that transcends state sovereignty is only pursued by extremist groups like Al-Qaeda or ISIS, who have no legitimacy in contemporary international legal and diplomatic norms and practices. Most Muslims and their rulers accept that the nation-state is here to stay, so it is better to work within the system of the nation-state to achieve one's goals than destroy it through holy war (jihad). At the same time, they, like the people of other Western civilizations, also consider a singular Western view of modernity as problematic. There are thus suggestions for an Islamicized (like a Hinduized or Sinicized) modernity which can take ideas from the West without imitating it and weakening the Islamic (or Hindu or Chinese) identity. These need not pose

[56] Michael Edwardes, *East-West Passage: The Travel of Ideas, Arts, and Inventions between Asia and the Western World* (Taplinger, 1971), p. 94 (cited in Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, p. 174).

[57] Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, pp. 48–9.

[58] Turner, "Islam as a Theory of International Relations." See also, Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "*International Relations* Theory and the *Islamic* Worldview," in Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, eds., *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 184–206.

[59] Amitav Acharya, "How the Two Big Ideas of the Post-Cold War Era Failed," *The Washington Post*, 24 June 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/06/24/how-the-two-big-ideas-of-the-post-cold-war-era-failed/.

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radical alternatives to Western-derived modernity but can complement it in creating a more pluralistic universalism in the world order.

The World Order of the Indian Ocean

The most culturally diverse but economically connected of the five world orders discussed in this article is the maritime world order of the Indian Ocean World Order. This was one of the early centers of globalization. As John Hobson notes, globalization did not begin with the rise of the West after 1500 AD but began in 500 AD. Rather, as he puts it "after 500 [AD] Persians, Arabs, Africans, Javanese, Jews, Indians and Chinese created and maintained a global economy down to about 1800 [AD]."[60] There was a pacified environment with low transit taxes to facilitate global trade. There were also sufficiently rational capitalist institutions to support global trade. There were a series of interlinked civilizations and empires: especially Tang China (618–907) and Islamic empires (Umayyad/Abbasid empire: 661–1258661–1258; Fatimid in North Africa: 909–1171).[61] The Gupta in India, Srivijaya in Java and later Sung, Mind, and Qing empires in China, Malacca in Southeast Asia, and Mughal empires in India also played key roles in maintaining commerce.[62]

At the heart of this civilizational multiplex was the Indian Ocean. Before Columbus, this was the world's largest trading network, where modern globalization took its initial roots. And the Indian Ocean was not a world of hegemony. The two major powers that might have imposed hegemony over the ocean, India and China, did not, and could not. While India has a strong cultural and economic role in Southeast Asia, a key part of the Indian Ocean trading network, this did imply Indian strategic dominance. Neither was the Indian Ocean a Chinese lake. Although many Southeast Asian states including Srivijaya, Malacca, and Siam had tributary relations with China, the Indian Ocean trade was not managed by China.[63] Much of the facilitation of India–China trade was done by Southeast Asian polities such as the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya (7th and 12th century AD) and the Hindu-Islamic polity of Malacca (founded in the early 15th century AD by a Hindu prince from the fallen Srivijaya kingdom, but whose second ruler converted to Islam) in the 15th century AD. These Southeast Asian polities were the ones that provided facilities and security for merchants from everywhere. Hence, while India and China and their products were a major part of the Indian Ocean trade, neither dominated nor managed that trade.

It was from this maritime world order that one of the most crucial norms, one that is central to sustaining contemporary globalization, took shape. This was the idea that the sea was the common heritage of humankind and that the right to trade was no one's monopoly. Today, Western writers such as Hugo Grotius and Western Powers such as Britain and the USA are credited with "freedom of the seas" and "free trade." But the origins of these principles and practices can be traced to the Indian Ocean trading network that linked the Middle East and Africa with China and Japan via India and Southeast Asia before it was disrupted by European colonialism.

The Indian Ocean shipping routes were free and open. In the 15th century, the port city of Malacca had a resident population of about 100 000, a majority of them being foreign traders. Malacca, where 84 languages were spoken, has been described by some as

[60] Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, p. 32.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 25.

[62] Amitav Acharya, the Text of Address to the 5th Youth Peace Conference Organized by the Singapore Soka Association, 30 September 2005.

[63] Hence the term "maritime silk road" is rather inappropriate. Silk was not the main commodity in the Indian Ocean trade, whose main commodities included Southeast Asian spices and later Indian cotton. Also important was trade in Hindu-Buddhist religious artifacts Wang Gungwu, *The Nanhai Trade: The Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), pp. 56 and 62.

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"the greatest trading system in the world" at this time, surpassing even Venice.[64] As a 16th-century Portuguese writer Tome Pires wrote, "Whoever is Lord in Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice."[65] Despite its size and scope, Malacca's trade was rule-based, or "well-regulated."[66] It was also deemed both "free" (from official interference from the local ruler) and fair. Malacca allowed foreign trading missions to appoint its own official, called a *shahbandar*, to regulate and look after the interests of their own merchants. To facilitate trade, the ruler of Malacca instituted a system of joint valuation of cargos by a panel of 10 merchants from different trading communities resident there before the amount of customs duties was decided. The prices foreign goods could fetch in Malacca were predictable and "fair" to all parties.[67] To conclude, until European powers came, the Indian Ocean remained an open cross-cultural universe of major global importance.[68]

The Rise of the West

In his best-selling *Civilisation: The West and the Rest*, historian Niall Ferguson argues that the rise of the West was possible not because of good luck, geography, bad sanitation, disease, or imperialism, but due to Europe's superior ideas and institutions. He calls these as six "Killer Apps" (using a contemporary metaphor that he admits would appeal to the younger generation that is his target audience), namely, competition, science, property rights, medicine, consumer society, and work ethic.[69]

But this grand and clever narrative sidesteps two critical factors.[70] The first is the role of prior ideas and innovations from other civilizations, especially Islam, China, and India, that the West borrowed in its climb to global dominance. The second is the role of imperialism and colonialism in suppressing others, not only the above three, but also the civilizations of Africa and South and North America, to eliminate competition and finance its ascent.

Turning to the first of these factors, one might start with the fact that Europe was in many respects a latecomer in the march of civilizations, especially, as noted earlier, if we consider Greece as a Mediterranean, rather than a European or "Western" entity, which was appropriated by the West as its wellspring. A standard Western narrative suggests that after the Fall of Rome with its sacking by the Vandals in the mid-5th century AD, Europe went into the "Dark Ages," not to revive till the 15th century when the Renaissance rediscovered classical Greco-Roman science, literature, art, etc. This is a false narrative for many reasons, not least because, as we have seen, Greek knowledge was preserved and enhanced by the Arabs from Baghdad to Spain. What is also worth noting is that the so-called European Dark Ages was also the period of the Golden Age of the East (anchored by the Han, Tang, and Song dynasties in China, Gupta-ruled India, and the flowering and expansion of the Arab and Islamic civilization). While Islam lacked a central core like the Tang dynasty based in

[64] M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

[65] *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires, and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, Translated from the Portuguese MS in the Bibliotheque de la Chambre des Deputes, Paris, and edited by Armando Cortesão, Vol. II, Reprint (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005), p. 287.

[66] K. N. Chaudhary, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 113.

[67] *Ibid*.

[68] "Before the Europeans' arrival, the world of Asian trade was no Oriental Valhalla. But as long as merchants paid customs, provided local sultans with gifts, and kept pirates at bay, the Indian Ocean was, more or less, a *mare liberum*. The idea that any nation might seek to control all maritime traffic would have struck merchants and rulers alike as ludicrous." William J. Bernstein, *A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World* (New York: Groove Press, 2008), pp. 155–6.

[69] Niall Ferguson, *Civilisation: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011).

[70] While I disagree strongly with Ferguson on his "killer apps" thesis, through my conversations with him while co-teaching in China, I found no evidence to support any accusations of racism that some label against him.

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Chang'an (modern Xian), it connected Mesopotamia, India, and Europe and in the process laid the foundation of globalization.

The borrowing of ideas and innovations from the three leading Eastern civilizations, China, India, and Islam, were a major factor behind the rise of the West. As mentioned earlier, that Islamic philosophy helped the cause of European rationalist thinkers who challenged the notion of divine creation, While Islamic science, including chemistry, optics, and medicine, were borrowed by Europeans making the Renaissance possible. chemistry, optics, and medicine were borrowed by Europeans to make the Renaissance possible. I have also noted earlier that while many European scholars from the 19th century onward saw China as a degenerate civilization, China was the leading economy of the world between the 12th and 19th centuries. Its ideas and inventions, such as paper, printing, gunpowder, and paper currency, contributed powerfully to the rise of modern European science and technology. So far as India is concerned, the subcontinent was, at first, a net exporter to Europe. Even the deeply Eurocentric British historian Niall Ferguson concedes that it was Indian cotton, imitated by Britain, that triggered Britain's own industrial revolution and consumer society. In Southeast Asia, Malacca acted as an important link for Europe's spice trade from Asia. The many Eastern contributions to Western civilization have been, in effect, immense and remain unacknowledged in the *mainstream* Western historical and IR narratives.

Let me now turn to the second factor behind the West's rise that Ferguson dismisses, namely imperialism and colonialism. As already stated, I do not argue that imperialism and racism are the monopolies of Western civilization. But my goal here is to simply dismiss the argument that the rise of the West had little to do with imperialism and colonialism. This to me is a false claim. Without colonialism, the six "killer apps" might not have come about, and if they did, would not have been so powerful. My argument is that colonialism was the 7th "killer app," one that really killed on the path to the rise of Europe and the West.

Western historians argue that Europe emerged as the dominant civilization in the 1500s, but in reality, the East had remained dominant till the early 1800s. According to British economist Angus Maddison, in 1820 China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 29% of the world GDP and equal to that of all of Europe. China's per capita GDP was lower, because of its large population, but using 1960 dollars as the basis, Paul Bairoch estimates that in 1750, the per capita income of East was roughly equal to that of Western Europe and China's was equal to that of major Western economies.[71] Europe did not take off until three centuries after the onset of its initial imperial expansion in the 15th century AD, which means that imperialism must be counted as a prime suspect behind Europe's rise.

But such deductions aside, we can consider some well-known facts. Diseases brought by European settlers wiped out 20 million people or up to 95% of the native population of North and South America,[72] allowing further European expansion. The Inca Empire, once among the largest and most prosperous in the world, was already devastated by smallpox before Pizzaro conquered it. After the conquest of the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayas, gold, silver, and food sourced from the Americas, especially from the collapsed Inca Empire, fueled Spanish prosperity and imperialism. European migration to these continents relaxed Europe's population pressure. Potato, originally grown in Latin America, might have saved Europe from the scourge of recurring famines and given its native population the level of nutrition needed to achieve domestic stability and further its imperial expansion.

Africa was the chief source of the slave trade that was indispensable for European prosperity and US rise to global power. Africa also served as a medical laboratory for Europe to test its medical innovations, including drugs that would preserve the lives of European colonialists and allow them to venture further into the continent. From India, millions of

[71] Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, p. 75.

[72] PBS, "The Story of… Smallpox—and other Deadly Eurasian Germs," http://www.pbs.org/gunsgermssteel/variables/smallpox.html.

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pounds were annually siphoned off to Britain, as captured by the "Drain Theory" developed by Indian economist Dadabhai Naoroji.[73] As Lord Curzon, the British Viceroy for India, put it in 1898, "India was the pivot of our Empire. If this Empire lost any other part of its dominion we could survive, but if we lost India, the sun of our Empire would be set."[74]

Europe's rise also meant the emergence of a European World Order (going by the definition of world order provided at the outset). Its main political elements were the principles and institutions of Westphalian sovereignty. Formalized in 1648, it ended the authority of the Pope or the somewhat mythical Holy Roman Empire over the rulers of Western Europe and placed the nation-state as the highest authority that citizens of a country owed their allegiance to. But as Europe conquered and colonized the world, it pursued a dual system. In Europe the sovereign state system and balance of power were maintained, along with the idea of the idea of equality of states, and the separation of the Church from the state. But outside Europe, whether in Europe's colonies such as India or in countries such as China or Thailand, which were not formally colonized, the imperial powers imposed a very different standard: a so-called "standard of civilisation."[75] "Civilisation" here has nothing to do with culture or achievement. The European standard of civilization was a legal political concept under which a "civilised state required: (a) basic institutions of government and public bureaucracy; (b) organisational capacity for self-defence; (c) a published legal code and adherence to the rule of law; and (d) recognition of international law and norms, including those on the conduct of war and diplomatic exchange."[76] Using such criteria, imperial powers treated much of the non-Western world (Japan being a notable exception), including the most advanced civilizations of world, China, India, and Islamic countries, as "uncivilized," which were thus deemed as undeserving of sovereignty and equality. This standard was sometimes backed by force, as happened with the Opium Wars against China (1839–42, 1856–60), and later the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.

Ultimately, the rules and ideas that led to the creation of a European World Order were in good part founded on military force, economic exploitation, religious conversion, and racism. After the Second World War, as the European colonialism retreated, they applied the nation-state formula to the people they had ruled, and leaders of these postcolonial states found it expedient to adopt European-devised rules rather than revive their traditional polities and institutions. One enduring legacy of this Westphalianization of the world is the mismatch between international borders and the ethnic composition of states—a major source of conflict and intervention of the post-Second World War period.

The rise of the USA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was not as radical a break with the past as many Western scholars argue. The conventional argument about the US role in world affairs is that it was less enamored with European-style colonization, reflecting its own distinctive circumstances and values. But the "standard of civilisation" doctrine had found its place in the rise of the USA as a world power. One dimension of this was outright colonialism. Although Rudyard Kipling coined the term "The White Man's Burden" in a poem in February 1899, the slogan was used by the USA to justify its colonial takeover of the Philippines and Cuba. In February 1899, the USA formally annexed the Philippines when Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris of 1898 between the USA and Spain that granted the US control over the Philippines.

[73] Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (London: Swan Sonneschein, 1901).

[74] Cited in *Ibid*. p.vi.

[75] According to Buzan, "the 'standard of civilisation' has its roots in the culturally widespread trope of 'civilised' versus 'barbarian'. It took its specific modern form in the 19th century, primarily as a European legal term. No specific set of criteria for the 'standard of civilisation' was ever codified, but the general practice was to define the standard by the contemporary forms of government prevailing in Europe." Barry Buzan, "The 'Standard of Civilisation' as an English School Concept," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2014), pp. 576–94.

[76] Brett Bowden, "To Rethink Standards of Civilisation, Start with the End," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2014), pp. 614–31.

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The end of World War II marked the end of the European World Order and the beginning of what would be known as the liberal international order, liberal hegemony, or simply the liberal order, but which I will call the American World Order.[77] The USA built the post-war world order in its own image and in keeping with its own interests. It kept faith with some elements of the European World Order, such as free trade. But the USA also championed the principles of self-determination and democracy, which had never really been a part of the European World Order. But with the outbreak of the Cold War, these goals were subservient to the strategic goal of containing communism. But where the American World Order was supposedly most distinctive from the European World Order was in discarding its predecessor's preferred mechanism for managing order. Unlike the Europeans who managed their relationships through the balance of power system, the USA claimed to be more idealistic and believed in a collective security system. It built a number of institutions much more so than Europe could ever have imagined building. This includes the United Nations, whose charter was drafted in San Francisco, as well as economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which later became the World Trade Organization. While Europe ruled the world through imperialism and colonialism, the USA claimed to rule the world indirectly through multilateral institutions. However, these institutions were, of course, created and maintained by the USA to serve its own purposes, but, as a liberal power, the USA argued that what was in its own interest was also in the interest of the world.

The standard narrative of the American World Order gives scant recognition to the contribution of postcolonial countries. Yet, the post-war order in the second half of the 20th century was not the handiwork of Western powers, Europe, and the USA. It was also significantly shaped by contributions from the postcolonial states of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Much has been made of human rights as the West's distinctive contribution to contemporary IR; some even call it the West's new "standard of civilisation,"[78] against which all other societies are to be judged. In this framing, the postcolonial states are cast as abusers and violators. The truth is that the postcolonial states recognized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and constructed other elements of human rights in meetings such as the Asian–African Conference in Bandung in 1955. They championed both political and economic rights unlike the colonial West which had denied both to colonized peoples.[79]

While today America remains the most powerful state in the world, the post-war order it built, or the American World Order, is in crisis and decline, a process that started before

[77] For contrasting views on the origins and nature of the American World Order, see G. John Ikenberry, *The Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

[78] David P. Fidler, "The Return of the Standard of Civilisation," Articles by Maurer Faculty, Paper 432 (Bloomington, IN: Maurer School of Law, Indiana University Digital Repository, 2001), https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1434&context=facpub.

[79] "The standard account of the development of international human rights norms identifies three phases: the first addressing civil and political rights, the second economic and social rights, and the third collective rights. The West is credited with the first, the Soviet bloc with the second, and the developing world with the third. In reality, however, during the negotiation of the two Covenants newly independent states consistently stressed the primacy of civil and political rights, and they were the strongest advocates of robust enforcement mechanisms." Christian Reus-Smit, "Building the Liberal International Order: Locating American Agency," Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 28–31 August 2014, pp. 12–13. The paper is derived from his book, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). The covenants referred to are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both adopted in 1966.

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the Trump presidency.[80] Other powers, especially China and India, are rising relative to the USA, although none of them is likely to emerge as a global hegemon. World order is likely to take a "multiplex" turn. A Multiplex World is like a multiplex cinema, which gives the audience a choice of actors, producers, directors, and plots. Some are Hollywood fare of action and Western, others are Bollywood type of song and dance, still others are Chinese-style Kungfu (invented at the Shaolin temple founded by the Indian monk Bodhidharma). At the same time, just as the screens in a multiplex are under the same roof, countries and regions are linked to each other today to produce an overarching but pluralistic global order. There is an underlying unity in diversity. In this Multiplex World, one cannot any longer understand the global affairs in terms of a single civilization. The era of Western dominance is ending. The rest is taking its due place and may be increasingly dominant in the making of the future world order.

Conclusion

The dominant perspectives on IR focus on the rise of the Western civilization and the global expansion of the European Westphalian system as their starting point. This leads to a narrow Eurocentric understanding of IR that obscures the role and contribution of other civilizations to the evolution of world order.

A Global IR perspective holds that the study of IR should reflect its global heritage. Using civilizations - rather than nation states - as the starting point, one gets a broader picture of how the contemporary world order came about. The West provided some of the key ideas for of diplomacy, statecraft and economic exchange that are central to the study of IR today, but other civilizations were doing the very same thing previously and will do so in the future. Moreover, all civilizations have their dark sides, which are revealed throughout history. And contrary to Huntington's thesis, civilizations do not always clash with each other, but often interact peacefully and learn from each other. Among today's civilizations, many hybrid and syncretic aspects that are products of mutual learning exist. As the world makes the transition from a Western-dominated world order, students of IR should challenge the traditionalist view and appreciate the multiple, global heritage of their field and the pluralistic, decentered, or multi-civilizational world order that lies ahead.

Such a world order will not be dominated by any single nation or civilization. Yet, it will feature significant flows of ideas, goods, and other economic flows. Nor would it be a seamless and borderless world as imagined by some analysts not so long ago. This world will feature a diversity of ideas and ideologies—democracy, communitarianism, authoritarianism, extremism, populism, etc., rather than being shaped by any single political or economic ideology, as once hypothesized by Francis Fukuyama in his End of History thesis. And despite the multi-cultural makeup, this world order will not necessarily be afflicted by a clash of civilizations. I have termed this world order as a Multiplex.[81] Among the five world orders discussed in the article, perhaps the Indian Ocean world order provides the closest approximation to a Multiplex World.

[80] Amitav Acharya, "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World," *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Fall 2017), pp. 271–85. For an opposing view on the prospects of the liberal order, see G. John Ikenberry, "Why the Liberal Order Will Survive," *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2018), pp. 17–29. My argument is not that the liberal order will completely disappear, but will survive in parts or in "rump" while losing its hegemonic position.

[81] The idea of a Multiplex World Order is discussed in Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*; and Amitav Acharya, "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World,"

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